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ABSTRACT

Part 1 of a 6-part series of pamphlets deals with anecdotes from the author's diverse teaching experiences in a high school vocational agriculture program. The 11 stories, to be utilized in vocational agriculture teacher education, are followed by questions and activities analyzing the case studies and prompting alternative solutions. The stories revolve around a vocational agriculture teacher's experiences with both parents, students, and teachers in dealing with: program development, agricultural improvement, teaching problems, low-achievers, father-son relationships; students' psychological problems, animal husbandry, student placement in vocational agriculture programs, disciplinary problems, and field trips. (JB)

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PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN AGRICULTURE

by Raymond Clark

EXPERIENCES IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

PART I

Teaching High School Students

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August, 1971

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EXPERIENCES IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Part I
Teaching High School Students

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August 1971

Foreword

This is one of a series of pamphlets dealing with several aspects of the program of vocational agriculture. Each pamphlet consists of a series of events and happenings as they actually occured. Each is a true story, and it describes an actual experience which I have had during the past forty-five years in the vocational agriculture field. Many of the experiences described here are those which I had while I was a teacher of vocational agriculture. Others describe experiences as a teacher-educator or as a state supervisor of vocational education in agriculture.

These stories of events and happenings may be used by many different persons. (1) By students to discover the nature of some of the work of the teacher of vocational agriculture. Some who read these stories may become more determined to enter the profession. Others may decide to find other fields of work. (2) By student teachers who may read these stories as they find themselves confronted with similar experiences or problems. We may be able to share experiences through the medium of these pages. Some ideas may be found to help smooth out rough spots for student teachers. I hope they will be able to discover other solutions to problems and other methods which will be of value to them. (3) By my colleagues in vocational agriculture. They may find a few new suggestions; they are likely to discover that we have had similar problems; and, I feel certain that they will be in a position to say, "That reminds me of an experience I had _ _ _ _ _."

In presenting this series of anecdotes, it is recognized that they reflect the objectives of "establishment in farming," and "developing agricultural leadership" which were accepted at the time they were written. Teachers in service and those who are preparing for teaching may ask themselves, "How would I meet similar situations today?" What new or different solutions would I need to use to meet similar situations with students preparing for careers in farming and/or agricultural business?

While any division of the series of anecdotes results in some overlapping, for the convenience of readers, the anecdotes have been assembled into pamphlets under the following titles:

1. Teaching High School Students
2. Future Farmers Programs
3. Post-High School Farmer Training Programs
   A. Young-Farmer Programs
   B. Adult-Farmer Programs
4. Problems of Relationship
5. Program Planning
6. Student Teachers

Students preparing to teach vocational agriculture will find in these anecdotes examples of many typical problems faced by teachers of agriculture. It is hoped that these problems will help students visualize real situations as they work through the professional education courses required for certification, and as they consider the subject matter of technical agriculture in relation to planning and conducting instructional programs in local schools.

Teachers in-service, who may read these stories, will say, "Let me tell you about a similar experience I had _ _ _ _ _," and "I would have done it differently. I would _ _ _ _ _." In groups of experienced teachers this could lead to spirited discussion and demonstration to emphasize an aspect of method, or application of principle.

Among either pre-service or in-service groups of teachers it is hoped that these experiences and happenings will stimulate teachers to study methods and principles in a realistic and constructive manner.

Raymond M. Clark, Professor (Retired)
Department of Secondary Education and Curriculum
July 1971

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TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The series of anecdotes in this section deals with experiences in the high school vocational agriculture program. At the time these were written the primary objective of the vocational agriculture program was, "establishment in farming." We did not attempt to prepare students specifically for non-farm agricultural business.

As you study these stories I suggest that you ask yourself a number of questions - and prepare answers to them! Such questions as the following may be included in your list:

1. What educational, sociological or psychological problems are involved in this story?

2. Did the author use acceptable methods in solving the problem? What alternative methods might be used?

3. How would similar problems be handled when one or more of the students in the class have agricultural business as an occupational objective?

TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

I VISIT A FARMING PROGRAM

Many times one has an experience which has a "little bit of bad mixed with a little bit of good." I would like to tell you about one such experience I had.

One hot summer day, I called at one of the schools in the fruit belt of Michigan and asked for the teacher of vocational agriculture. The teacher had been notified that I was coming, so he was available. I indicated that I would like to go with him to visit some of his boys and to see their farming programs. I wanted him to chose the places we would visit and let me ride along to observe.

We started out and soon came to a farmstead, with a nicely landscaped, modern home, fruit storages, and machine sheds surrounded by beautiful orchards. We stopped at the machine shed where we found our vocational agriculture boy who would be a senior in September.

The teacher introduced us and went to find the boy's father, while I stayed back and struck up a conversation with the boy.

I asked, "What grade are you in?"

"I'll be a senior this year," was the reply.

"That's good; what are you going to do when you graduate?" was my next question.

"I dunno, come back here and help dad, I guess."

I then said, "Well, what do you grow here, anything except fruit?"

"No, we just grow peaches and apples. The only other thing we have on the farm is a quarter acre of pop corn that I have for my project."

Then I asked, "Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"One little brother."

I thought it was time to change the conversation to another direction, so I asked, "What do you use to spray your orchards?"

He climbed up on a sprayer which was attached to a big caterpillar tractor and said, "Why, this sprayer and this big spray gun."

I had expected a reply in terms of fungicides and insecticides, so I said, "But what material do you use to control scab on apples?"

He said, "I dunno, but we use this spray gun. You sure can cover 'em fast with it."

I said, "What do you use to control worms in apples?"

"I dunno, dad mixes all the sprays, I just run the gun."

I hated to give up, so I said, "What method of pruning do you use on apples?"

Again I got the same reply, "I dunno, dad takes care of that."

Just at that point the teacher came back with "dad". We were introduced and then dad started to "show us around." First, we looked at three or four storages where dad said, "The college came in and wanted to run some experiments on storage of peaches. We are trying to find out how long we can hold them and what's the best method of holding them."

We then started up through the orchard. We came to a block of apples which were probably about eight years old. Dad pulled back some of the branches and said, "We're trying a new method of pruning on this block. Mr. _____(an extension specialist from State College) went out to the west coast and came back with this idea, so we're trying it to see if it will work here."

We went on to another block of apples. They were mammoth big trees and perfectly sound. Dad said, "Look at these trees, aren't they beautiful? My grand-dad planted them and they're still going strong. I noticed a little scab the other day, but we burned that out with a good spray. I think we got it all." He brought out a pocket magnifying glass and looked at the leaves to convince himself that he had really "burned it out."

On a piece of higher ground we came to a large block of peaches and dad said, "Look at these peaches, aren't they just about perfect? You can't find a healthier block of peaches for their age in Michigan." I believed him. They were certainly a credit to him and to his ability.

But I had been thinking, "Here is one of the most up-to-date, progressive, well informed farmers I have ever met. But his high school

son doesn't know anything about the business except how to turn the spray gun on and off, and his farming program consists of a quarter of an acre of pop corn, the only other crop on the farm besides the fruit. Besides, the son hasn't said a word since dad appeared."

I decided to take a chance and see what would happen, so I said to dad, "These peaches are wonderful, and I never saw nicer apple trees, but who is going to take this over when you are through with it?"

Dad said, "Why thi· boy here."

"What does he know about it?" was my next question. Dad had quite a covering of the proverbial red hair, and his face turned an equally brilliant hue. I thought I might have to run, and then he said, "My _____, he doesn't know anything does he?"

I said, "I think it's about time you were teaching him something."

Dad agreed, and we began to outline what experience the son could be given in this highly specialized industry which requires so much "know how." We discussed plans for a real farming program which would prepare the boy for a real partnership rather than the, "Guess I'll just come back and help dad" idea.

I don't need to review the discussion I had with the teacher after we left the farm. I will say that he "saw the light" and worked out a program which resulted in a very satisfactory farming situation for this boy.

I have met this father many times since and he never fails to remind me of our first meeting and to express appreciation for my boldness in calling attention to a problem and an opportunity which had not been mentioned by the teacher of vocational agriculture.

* * * *

1. How would you have approached this father to develop a farming program for his son?

2. Can you justify popcorn as the major productive enterprise for this boy on this farm?

3. How would you attempt to develop a suitable farming program for this boy on this farm?

4. Outline a suggested farming program for this boy from his first year in vocational agriculture in high school through five years of a young farmer program.

I HELP A FUTURE FARMER MEMBER BALANCE A RATION

For many years I taught vocational agriculture in one area of southeastern Michigan. This area was considered by the residents as "just about tops" so far as its agriculture was concerned. The soil was productive, the farmers generally used good practices, and they made relatively high incomes.

Nevertheless, I knew there was still room for improvement on many farms. Besides, I felt a responsibility to get my students ready to take over where their dads left off. I wanted them to be better farmers than their dads and to continue to keep abreast of new developments in agriculture. Obviously it would be necessary for me to base my teaching on their home farm situations, discover problems, find solutions and put them into practice.

We had been studying the feeding of producing dairy cows for several days. We had worked out practical rations, using the feeds which the boys reported were available on their home farms. I was sitting at my desk one morning before classes assembled when one of my boys came in and said, "Will you help me recheck a ration for our herd of cows? We have these feeds on the farm." He handed me a list, which he had prepared, of roughages and typical farm grown feeds.

This boy was a shy individual, who had not said much in class. I had begun to feel that I wasn't getting much out of him, so I felt happy that he had come in. At the same time I was a little worried because his dad had an excellent herd of high producing animals. I had visited the farm many times and had never discovered anything which I felt would improve the situation with regard to feeding the dairy herd.

I said, "Sure, come down the third hour and we'll go to work on it and see what we can do."

We worked out a ration based on the test records which the boy had compiled from his class work in agriculture. We checked every detail

against college experiment station recommendations and against Morrison's Feeds and Feeding. "Now take this ration home and feed it to only one or two cows for a month and see what happens to their production. We don't want to throw the whole herd off."

We had already determined that the grain ration we had worked out would be considerably cheaper than the one being fed and I could hardly believe that such a saving could be accomplished without a decrease in production.

The boy agreed, so I forgot the matter for about two weeks and then I said to him one day, "How is that ration working out?"

"Oh, Swell!"

"Well that's good, are those cows holding up their production?"

"Sure, it's even increased."

"Good, are you sure the two you picked weren't on the way up anyway?"

"Oh, we're feeding it to the whole herd. Dad thought there wasn't any use of waiting and the production went up on the whole herd."

The herd continued to hold the higher production level.

What was accomplished? It is obvious that the farmer saved money. Actually the annual savings from this changed practice amounted to approximately one-half of my annual salary.

More important, I feel was the effect on the boy. He gained confidence in himself. He learned that he could solve problems and be successful in the introduction of new scientific practices. He gained greater respect from his classmates because he had been successful in part of his farming program. Most important of all, a relationship between father and son became firmly cemented. The son had been able to help dad improve the production of his dairy herd and dad recognized the son's ability. They were one step nearer a sound partnership which would carry the farming program into a new generation.

* * * *

1. Do you beiieve that a teacher is justified in helping an individual boy work out solutions to home farm problems after the material has been thoroughly covered in class?

2. Do you believe that I should have made specific recommendations to this son for the feeding of this dairy herd?

3. Do you believe I could have made equally good recommendations as to feeding this dairy herd had I not been well acquainted with the family and with the farm conditions? Why?

4. How might a similar situation today be used by a teacher to help students who are interested in careers in the feed industry?

A BEGINNING TEACHER TAKES OVER A RUN DOWN DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

A young teacher with whom I had worked as a student teacher in vocational agriculture accepted a position in a consolidated school. His predecessor had let the program and the facilities become disorganized. The boys had lost interest. They had no pride in the department or in their Future Farmer Chapter. The teacher told me the boys had a habit of coming into the agriculture room, jumping on the tables and running or jumping across the room from one table top to another.

The school had recently built a new vocational building which included a large shop and a room for vocational agriculture. The furniture was old and with the treatment the boys had given it, was badly scarred.

I called on the teacher at his school about the middle of his first year. I had previously learned of the situation which had existed in the school, so I went on this visit a little dubious as to what I would find.

As I went into the agriculture room a class was just coming out at the close of a period. They were orderly and came out as gentlemen. I went in and found a room with freshly painted walls. The cupboards and bookshelves were painted in attractive colors and the materials were all neatly arranged and in order. There were plants in bloom and new drapes at the windows.

After the usual greetings, I asked, "What's happened here? I expected to find some trouble and everything seems to be going along very smoothly."

The teacher grinned and said, "Yes, everything's OK now, but boy did I have a time for the first few days!"

I inquired as to what kind of a time he had had. He described the table walking scene, and the disorder of the room in general.

I then asked, "What did you do about it?"

"Well," he replied, "I decided that I had to do something to develop pride in the department. The first thing I did was to get permission to paint the walls. They had never been painted and looked dark and unattractive. There was nothing about the whole place that was attractive."

"Did you do all the painting yourself?" was my next question.

"No, I announced in my classes one day that I was going to start to paint and anybody that wanted to come in after school or in the evening could come and help. I worked two nights alone and the third night one boy showed up. Before the end of the week we had so many that we had to make a waiting list. They all wanted to help."

I had noted that new tables and chairs were in the room, so I asked about them, and the teacher said, "Yes the school board had ordered the new tables and chairs and after we finished the painting we talked over the question of putting the furniture in. The boys decided that they wanted it. I think they would just about kill anyone who would mark one of those tables."

I then turned to the drapes and asked, "What about these drapes? Aren't they pretty fancy for an ag room?"

"Yes", he replied, "We needed something to control the light. You know this is a new building and there were no shades in here. The Board of Education felt they could not spend any more money than necessary just now, so we priced shades and these drapes. The drapes were about twice as much as the shades, so the boys proposed that the Future Farmer Chapter pay the difference. The Board would pay the amount the shades would cost and the Chapter would pay enough more to get the drapes. The Board agreed so we got the drapes."

There was no question in my mind that this young teacher had developed pride in the room and facilities on the part of the students.

There was no longer any problem of boys walking on the tables or otherwise causing trouble in the classroom. But I was still wondering about the attitude of the students toward their Future Farmer Chapter and toward the study of vocational agriculture.

I asked the teacher, "What is your F.F.A. Chapter doing?"

"Well," he replied, "The program was pretty well down, but this summer I got some of the officers to attend the leadership training camp with me. They hadn't been participating before so it was a new experience for them. The camp was organized to include representatives from all the chapters in this part of the state. There were representatives from about 35 chapters present."

"Did it get any results?" I asked.

"Yes, the boys came home with some ideas to try out. They are working now on their parliamentary procedure. They also have plans for improving their supervised farming programs."

I looked over the bulletin board in the room. It had snap shots of boys' individual projects, as well as snap shots of the camp activities. Also included on the bulletin board was a very creditable program of work which the boys had developed to fit their chapter.

I wanted to needle the teacher a little, so I said, "Where did you copy this program of work?"

Very quickly I got my answer, "We didn't copy it. We did look over some other programs, but we decided they wouldn't fit our needs this year, so we wrote our own."

Much more might be written about this beginning teacher. However, I feel the point has been made that he was able to recognize some of the causes back of his situation. More than that, he was able to see that he must develop a feeling of pride in the department of vocational agriculture. There must be an acceptance of standards on the part of the students and that the standards should be determined by the students

themselves under his leadership. The results provide ample evidence that he was successful.

* * * *

1. Was this teacher justified in spending time after school and evenings to paint the agriculture room?

2. What other means could you devise to develop pride in the department on the part of the students?

3. Do you believe that this teacher might have accomplished more with his students if he had posted a set of rules on the bulletin board?

4. Can you suggest other activities which would help this Future Farmer Chapter to develop even more rapidly?

5. What principles of developing and maintaining interest did this teacher use?

A TEACHER WHO IS A MISFIT

A number of years ago a young man came to a neighboring school in my county to begin teaching vocational agriculture. He was a likeable young man, just out of college and full of zeal and energy to make good in the profession. He had an excellent farm background. He probably knew more real practical agriculture subject matter and skills than any of the other eight agriculture teachers in the county. We all wanted to see our new agriculture teacher make good. I watched his work with much interest.

One day just at the close of the school day, he walked into my room. He looked worried as I greeted him and asked him to sit down. He soon got to the point of his visit. He said, "My superintendent is after me because I am spending too much time on the farms." That seemed odd to me. Farm visits were then, just as they are now, one of the most important activities of the teacher of vocational agriculture.

I said, "What do you do on your visits?"

"Oh," he replied, "they call up in the evening and say they are going to spray potatoes tomorrow. They ask me if I will come out and help, so I agree and go out and work."

I asked, "Do you mean that you teach the boy how to mix the spray and show him how to apply it?"

"No, I just go out and help them get the job done."

"But don't you teach anything on the visit?"

"No, I guess not. Sometimes we just hoe the truck crops, and sometimes I ride the tractor for one of the farmers. They are short of help and I like to help them out."

"But," I asked, "How do you justify drawing a salary from a public school to do a job of teaching and then spend your time working for the neighbors? Is that a proper use of taxpayers money?"

He seemed to be taken aback. I think he expected me to tell him to defy his superintendent and go ahead with his present program. After

considerable more discussion along the same line he thanked me and said, "I'll try to do better. From now on I'm going to have a reason for every visit, and I'm going to see that my boys learn how to do things for themselves. I'm going to be a teacher, not a hired man."

A few weeks later, he was back again. He said, "You know we've got a lot of farmers with just a few apple trees. They don't take care of them and I'm going to buy a duster and dust their trees for them. What do you think of that?"

Apple orchards were not a significant factor in the farm income of his area. They were not adapted to the area and probably might better have been removed entirely.

I asked, "Why do you want to take on this job?"

"Well," he replied, "They have the trees and I think they ought to take care of them."

"Do you think you can improve the quality of the crop?"

"Sure."

"Will you be teaching your boys how to take care of a home orchard, or will you do all the work yourself?"

He remembered our previous conversation, and he said, "Oh, I'll take some of the boys along each time and they'll learn how to take care of their orchards too."

"Who is going to own the duster?"

"Well, I'll have to buy it. The school doesn't want to buy it, and the F.F.A. doesn't have the money."

I said, "Jim, you aren't going to do this to make money on the side are you?"

"No! I just figured this would be something to help out these farmers."

I cautioned him again about keeping his activities in line with the philosophy of vocational programs. I emphasized that vocational agriculture must provide organized, systematic instruction. I pointed out that his activities must be of such a nature as to warrant public

support in line with this philosophy.

He went home and bought his duster and operated it through the spring and summer. In the fall I was at the county fair, visiting with one of my farmer friends who lived in the area served by the young teachers' school. My farmer friend was on the Board of Education of the school. He said, "I don't know what we're going to do. Jim got that duster and he gets out early in the morning and runs up and down the rows of trees with it. He works hard, but that's not what we're paying him for. I wish he would work as hard on the job he's supposed to do."

I asked hopefully, "Does he bring some of his boys along and teach them how to do the job?"

"No, if he did it wouldn't be so bad, but never once has he had a boy along. He just doesn't seem to know how to handle himself on a tax supported job."

I said, "Well he certainly knows his agriculture."

"He surely does! He's the best we ever had in that respect, but he doesn't know how to assume the role of a teacher instead of a high class hired man."

I felt "in the middle". After all I was just a neighboring teacher of vocational agriculture and had no desire to interfere except to help a fellow teacher make good. I decided to have another talk with Jim. I met him later in the week, at the fair; we found a quiet corner and had another talk. We talked about the necessity of gearing our activities to a program of teaching young folks and adults how to farm, not working for farmers as hired men. He agreed that I was right and that he would try to improve. He still wanted to make good.

I wish I could say, "He became a very successful teacher of vocational agriculture," but I can't. He continued throughout that school year with the same poor judgement. In the spring the Board of Education decided to hire another man to teach vocational agriculture. Our teacher took over his dad's farm and has become a very successful farmer. He is a strong supporter of the program of the local teacher

of vocational agriculture in his area.

* * * *

1. Can you describe situations where a young teacher might be justified in working with a farmer, or in an agri-business situation?

2. Do you agree that the teacher "should be teaching" when he works on the farm or in agri-business?

3. Might a teacher be justified in working a day or two in agri-business, or on a farm to get experience he had not previously had? Should he accept wages for this kind of work in addition to his salary from the Board of Education?

A STUDENT OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE
GROWS CELERY

"That boy is so dumb, I'm going to kick him out of agriculture," is a statement I hear from teachers of vocational agriculture many times during each year. Each time I hear it, I think about Bill.

Bill was one of my "dumb" students. He was one of those boys who just about drives a teacher to distraction trying to decide what to do with him. His family background was good. His father was an intelligent, law abiding citizen who did a good job of truck farming. The family was interested in school. Bill was the youngest of five children and four had already graduated from high school.

I was in the habit of occasionally making inquiries of other teachers about some of my students. Bill was one of these. "But," the English teacher would say when I would ask about him, "Bill can't write! I assign a theme and he just can't write anything."

"And even if he did write something, you probably couldn't read it," I would reply.

"That's right, and spell! Heavens, he couldn't even spell c-a-t. I can't see how I can pass that boy."

Then I would try to think up something, so we could try again. I'd ask, "How about letting him write his themes on some agricultural topic, maybe something about his farming program. He likes agriculture and maybe we could get a little spark of interest there?"

"Well, I don't think it will work, but I'll try, just once more!" she would say.

I would reply, "I know we can't make Bill feel that he is a special character around here, but I'd hate to see him out of school with nothing to do. We might be responsible for turning him into a bum."

Sometimes I felt that, if she told the truth, the English teacher felt that he didn't have far to go.

Then I would drop in on the social science teacher and we would

have much the same sort of conversation. I usually began with, "Well, how is Bill doing this six weeks?"

"Terrible, I'll have to fail him. He can't read, - poor elementary school training! I just can't have that boy around any longer. He's got to fail!"

"Well, that's too bad. Bill knows quite a lot about marketing vegetables. Did you know that he and his dad furnish practically all of the fresh out-of-season vegetables sold here in town?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"Why don't you try to get him going on that subject some day? Ask him about grades and prices of vegetables and all that sort of thing. That's part of social science isn't it?"

"Yes, I guess so. It's a little out of the ordinary. Our text book doesn't say anything about such things but, _ _ _ I'll try."

Then I'd get hold of Bill and say, "Bill, now look here, you aren't doing much in English are you?"

"No, I don't care much for that stuff."

"But Bill, you've got to get through high school."

"Yeah I guess so. Dad wants me to, and I guess it's a good thing, but I don't see much sense to some of that stuff."

"Well," I'd say, "I have been talking with some of your teachers and they said they are going to assign some special reports. Now I want you to work on them. They are part of agriculture and you've got to do a good job on them"

Bill would agree and I would hear somewhat grudging reports from his teachers, that he was doing a little better. So I would be encouraged to make my calls again just before the next marking period.

Of course Bill was not a brilliant student in vocational agriculture either. He worked hard, and he learned much about the growing and storage and marketing of fresh vegetables. He learned how to control water tables on the muck area which constituted the family farm.

When Bill was in his second year in agriculture, he announced that he was going to have celery for his major productive enterprise during the coming summer. He spent much of his time in class working on details

of his plans. The remainder of the class were livestock farmers, so Bill worked a good deal by himself, except that he had an opportunity to report his plans to the class and he listened and participated in discussion when other class members reported their plans.

* * * *

"FUTURE FARMER BOY MAKES * * * * DOLLARS ON CELERY," was the headline in the local daily paper on a day just before school opened in the fall. The principal opened the teachers meeting on the first day of school by displaying the clipping from the paper. For two years he had been a quiet, but very interested and cooperative person, helping me in my effort to keep Bill in school. I had not mentioned his celery project, so I was as surprised as any other faculty member when the principal brought out the clipping.

He said, "Here's a high school boy - a senior beginning today - whom we have called dumb. Yet he made as much money this summer as any of us will make during this school year. And that's not all, he has learned that he can get along financially. He can still hold up his head and meet folks with confidence. He isn't branded with failure as he would have been if we had forced him out of school last year. We'll still have our troubles this year, but let's remember that Bill has something - that he's not just plain failure."

* * * *

1. Do you believe teachers are justified in adapting the curriculum to help students, such as Bill to succeed?

2. What is the role of the teacher and of the guidance counselor in working with students like Bill?

3. Do you believe I was justified in allowing Bill to pursue work in vegetable production while he was enrolled in an "animal husbandry" class? What dangers do you see in my procedures?

A FATHER WISHES THIS TEACHER WOULD HELP DEVELOP A FATHER-SON PARTNERSHIP

Father-son partnerships represent one route over which young men are able to establish themselves in farming. The route has become increasingly popular and teachers of vocational agriculture have learned to help parents and sons to develop satisfactory partnerships as time has provided more and more experience.

"Don't dig too deep into a farmer's business," was the advice I heard many times as a young teacher. "Help them improve their livestock production or fertilize their crops, but don't interfere with their financial affairs," was also part of the advice which these well-wishers often volunteered. Needless to say, we learned to heed much of this kind of advice and, I fear, missed opportunities to help young men get started in farming as a result.

I doubt that the advice was particularly sound. One instance will serve to raise the question of soundness. It may also present a challenge to some teachers of vocational agriculture to check their own activities regarding the development of partnership agreements.

During the first year that I served as a state supervisor of agricultural education, I visited a number of teachers of vocational agricultural during the summer months so that we could spend our time visiting the farming programs of the students. I was interested in seeing the programs and in observing the work of teachers in their contacts with parents and students on the farm.

One of these visits was to a teacher located in the fruit section of south-western Michigan. The teacher and I started out one morning and made our first stop at a nicely kept farm near the edge of the village. A quick glance around indicated that there were no enterprises on the farm except fruit, also, that there was a diversity of fruits including apples, peaches, and some other tree fruits together with an acreage of small fruits such as raspberries.

We soon located the father and his son. After the usual formalities were over, the four of us started out to look over the boy's "project". The teacher and his student started out ahead and left the father and myself to bring up the rear. I had seen many projects before, but this morning I wanted to know what this father, in a highly specialized farming business, was thinking about his son and the program of vocational agriculture.

As we walked along I asked, "Do you have other children?"

"No, Jim is the only child."

"What grade is he in in school?"

"He's just finished the tenth grade. He has two more years to go in high school."

"Will he go on to college?"

"No-o, I don't think so. He can if he wants to, but I don't think he'll want to go. He might take a short course some time."

"Is he interested in his agriculture work in high school?"

"Oh, yes! That agriculture course is good for our farm boys."

"You mean then that you think Jim will stay on the farm?"

"Yes, I think he'd like to. _ _ _ You know, I wish this agriculture teacher would come out and help Jim and me fix up a partnership agreement. I've thought a lot about it, but it seems as if we need a third party just to help us get started, _ _ to sort of break the ice."

There it was, within twenty minutes of the time we first met, and without much effort on my part, this father had opened up the opportunity to get father and son together and to help them work out an agreement which would be mutually helpful.

We went on and looked over the berries. We talked about disease control, cultivation, pruning and many other practices, all of which are important, but I had a picture in my mind of a teacher and a boy hurrying ahead to look at the berry plants, when there was, following, a father who had a vision of his son, a partner in the total business.

I wish I could describe a successful and happy conclusion. On the way back to the village, I told the teacher of my visit with the father.

I described our conversation and then said, "Now I think you ought to get out your materials on partnerships and get back there within a day or two. See this father and help them get started on this partnership. They want your help and here's a chance to help this boy improve his programs. It's one of the best opportunities you could ask for."

"Yes, I guess you're right, I'll have to do that," he drawled in lazy agreement, but he never did. The next spring they fired the teacher and closed the department.

* * * *

1. What are some advantages and some disadvantages of making farm visits when the parents as well as the high school student (their son) can be involved in discussions?

2. Describe how a parent-son (or father-son) agreement may be a logical, and a psychological, next step for the boy who starts a farming program with a "project."

3. How might a teacher use the actual situation of one student as a basis for a unit of instruction to the entire class?

I HELP A BOY OVERCOME HIS BASHFULNESS

I suppose all teachers have been confronted with the problem of what to do with bashful students. There is nothing new or unusual about such problems and we have learned to cope with them. I have seen a few teachers who simply ignored such students and "passed them on." So long as they did not cause a disturbance in the class they were allowed to remain and get a grade, but no special effort was made to help them overcome their problems.

I want to review an experience which I had with one such bashful boy which seemed to get desirable results. This boy enrolled in my class in vocational agriculture one fall, after I had contacted him during the summer and visited with him about attending high school and described the programs of vocational agriculture, of machine shop, of commercial art, and other courses which could be elected by students in our school.

We worked along in class for a few weeks and the boys were beginning to participate freely in discussions, and to raise questions - all except Jim. He hadn't made a contribution. Occassionally I had asked him a direct question and he would shrug his shoulders and say, "I dunno." That is all I had been able to get out of him.

I watched his written work more carefully for the next week or two. It was always neat, well done, and accurate. It gave evidence that Jim was interested in agriculture and that he could be a good student.

Of course I had verified these conclusions from my farm visits and my contacts with his parents. I spent many hours of thought on the problem before doing much about it. I did not want to embarrass the boy before the other boys. I wanted to develop his confidence because I felt this would be the only way to help him.

Finally I launched a three-way program. First, I had a private talk with Jim about his farming program. He already had some rather poor quality ewes which he indicated would represent the beginning of his farming program. Using this plan as a beginning, we planned to buy

a good pure bred ewe and a pure bred ram to use as a nucleus to improve his flock. This decision gave me an opportunity to take Jim with me to look over a number of flocks so we could make a selection of foundation stock for him. I always took one or two other boys along and we managed to get Jim to take part in our conversations.

As a second point of attack, I talked with some of the leaders in my Future Farmer Chapter, as I always had done in the past, about boys we had in our beginning class who might make the State Farmer degree later on. My Future Farmer officers and other leaders had been in the habit of trying to discover potential State Farmers early so that they could help provide opportunities for experience for all who had a chance of qualifying for the degree. The boys agreed that Jim was a good student in terms of ability to read and understand the subject matter, but that "he would have to learn to talk." They began to go out of their way to bring him into their group and encourage him to participate in their discussions outside of class as well as in the classroom.

My third point of attack was more direct. After a few weeks of the more indirect approaches, I sat down with Jim after class one day and said, "Jim, you don't talk much in class do you?"

"Nope."

"I'll bet you say, 'I dunno', just because it's easier than coming through with an answer. Is that right?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"You know the answers, don't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, a fellow has to learn to talk some time, I'll make a bargain with you. The next time you come to class, I'm going to ask you a simple question and I want you to promise to answer it. Will you do it?"

"Yes," was all I could get out of him and that's all I wanted.

The next day I asked the question and Jim answered. After class I congratulated him and asked if he would try again tomorrow and he agreed to try.

From that time on things happened rapidly with Jim. The sheep

project developed nicely, but Jim developed more than the sheep. He entered the Future Farmer speaking contest. True he didn't win any state or national honors, but he became a very effective public speaker.

I left the school in the middle of the year in which Jim was a senior and the following summer, I had the pleasure of sitting in the annual state conference of teachers of vocational agriculture and listening to an address given by Jim before 200 teachers of vocational agriculture on his concept of the program of the Future Farmers. It was one of the best addresses I have ever heard on the subject by any one. Occasionally a teacher of vocational agriculture who was present at this meeting, more than twenty years ago, will remind me of that talk by that outstanding Future Farmer boy so many years ago.

Jim came a long way. I have been glad that my boys and I didn't pass him up as being "Too bashful for any use."

* * * *

1. Do you believe that the teacher of vocational agriculture has a responsibility to help correct handicaps such as Jim had?

2. What activities could a Future Farmer chapter undertake to help members overcome such personal problems as Jim had?

3. What other agencies in the school or community could be called upon for assistance with the problem of bashfulness?

4. Was I justified in enlisting the aid of Future Farmer members to help Jim solve his problem?

5. Were we justified in attempting to help Jim with his problem of bashfulness without first determining its underlying cause?

A SECOND COURSE IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Once upon a time we taught our high school classes in vocational agriculture on a basis of subject matter courses, rather than on a more or less individualized basis as we do today. In the school where I taught, we offered vocational agriculture for high school students in only three grades, tenth, eleventh and twelfth. We taught Farm Crops and Soils, Animal Husbandry, and Farm Management in the three respective grades.

In Animal Husbandry, we placed major emphasis on dairy cattle since dairying represented the most important enterprise in the school area. Feeding beef cattle, swine, and poultry enterprises were also important. Our Animal Husbandry year was always a very busy one with the boys trying to cram as much as possible into that year. Often times they complained that we did't cover enough to help them to adequately develop their livestock programs. We didn't lack for interest. We lacked time.

I would discuss the problem with my students and they would agree that we were doing all we could under the circumstances. With such agreement I usually went ahead, dismissing from my mind any further study to see if we really were "doing all we could."

My students were not as easily satisfied. They kept on studying the problem and finally came up with a solution. One morning, in early spring, a group of my eleventh grade boys came into my room before school. This was not unusual, but I could see that "something was up," so I asked, "Well, what's on your minds today?"

The spokesman was a little embarrassed but he finally managed, "Mr. Clark, we are wondering if we could have another year of Animal Husbandry. Would you teach it?"

"What do you want with another year of Animal Husbandry?" I asked.

"Well, we aren't covering all we need now and we thought maybe you could go heavier on beef and hogs and maybe a little more on chickens next year. We covered dairy pretty good this year, but we need some more on these other things."

The boys all looked eager and seemed to be anxious about my response. I asked, "But what would happen to our Farm Management course? I thought you fellows would be in that class next year."

"Oh, we will, we'd take two courses in agriculture next year; Animal Husbandry and Farm Management."

"Do you mean you would get two credits in agriculture next year?"

"Sure, why not. It'll do us as much good as anything else around here."

"Do you think Mr. (the principal) would go along with a scheme like that?" I asked.

"Yeah, we got that all taken care of."

"You have! What did you do?" I exclaimed.

"Why, we thought we shouldn't bother you with this business, so we got up a petition and all us boys signed it and took it to the principal."

"What did he say?" I asked dubiously.

"He said to see you and see if you'd do it," replied the spokesman.

Naturally I was flattered. Also I wondered what would be the reaction of the principal when he saw me. Would he think I engineered the petition and accuse me of interfering with his administration of the school? Could we find a way to schedule another class in agriculture? Could I possibly find time to teach another class? With these and many more questions in mind, I finally said, "Well boys, I certainly appreciate the invitation to teach the class, and I'll do it if the principal and I can work out a schedule for it."

I wasted no time in getting to the principal's office. He saw me enter the outer office and said, "Come on in and sit down a minute."

I sat down and he continued, "Some of your boys were in here this morning. They want another Animal Husbandry class next year. Do you think you can teach it?"

I said, "They just told me. The whole idea for another class came from the boys."

"I know that. Do you think you can handle the class?" was his reply.

"Sure, I can handle it all right, can you schedule it?"

"Yes, I'll take care of that. We'll probably have to send a biology class over to Junior High School." (At that time, part of the job of the teacher of vocational agriculture in our state was to teach biology.) "You could teach the Animal Husbandry in the third period."

"What about the Farm Management," I asked. "Will you let those boys take two years of agriculture in one year and give two credits in agriculture?"

"Sure, why not? They might just as well take two agriculture subjects as to load up with a lot of academic work that they don't need. They've had all the English and social science that we require already."

So it was agreed, and for many years we taught a second year of animal husbandry.

* * * *

1. Was it essential, or merely important, that I deferred my decision with the boys until after I met with the principal?

2. What are some other alternatives (in addition to a second year of Animal Husbandry) which we might have considered?

A TEACHER INTERVIEWS THE PARENTS OF A NINTH GRADE BOY

Many teachers of vocational agriculture have exhibited some concern over the process of inducting new students into the program of vocational agriculture. This problem is particularly acute when the student transfers from a one-room rural school into the village or city high school. As a teacher of vocational agriculture, I have encountered this problem and I never have felt that I did a particularly good job, either with the boy or with his parents in helping them adjust to the high school program.

When I became a state supervisor, I had an opportunity to visit other teachers and occassionally I accompanied one of them on a visit to a prospective student and watched him work with the parents and the student. I would like to recall one of these visits with Joe, the teacher of vocational agriculture.

It was in August and I had written Joe a letter saying, "I'll be out to visit you on August . . . ." I arrived at the school early enough so that Joe would not be held up if he planned to visit his students.

When Joe came he said, "I had planned to visit a boy from the one-room school up north of here a ways. He graduated from the eighth grade last spring."

"I see," I replied. "Do you know the family?"

"No, I've never met them," replied Joe, "But we get quite a few students from that district and I try to call on all the prospects before school opens in the fall."

"I think that's a good idea," I replied. "Do the folks know you are coming?"

"Yes, I called them yesterday," Joe said. "I didn't think you would want me to change my plans, but I told the folks that I'd call this morning if I couldn't make it."

"Sure we'll go, I replied. "I hope I won't cramp your style, but I'll be interested in what you do."

We walked over to Joe's car and got in. As we started off Joe said, "I think these visits are very important. It helps the boy come into the high school and into the agriculture program knowing what he's getting into; and it helps the parents understand their responsibility too."

"What kind of responsibility can you pin on a parent on your first visit?" I asked.

Joe replied, "Well, of course it varies, and sometimes I fail to do what I wanted to do, but I like them to know what we expect in the way of supervised farming programs."

"How about F.F.A.?" I asked.

"Yes, that too," said Joe. "But more particularly I try to emphasize a farming program which will help get the boy started toward establishment somewhere in agriculture.

"Okay," I replied, I'll try to keep still and listen. You go ahead just as if I weren't here."

We drove into a fairly well kept farm yard. Evidently the family had been looking for us and they came out to the car to meet us. Joe introduced himself saying, "I'm Joe Brown, the agricultural teacher down at the high school."

The father said, "I'm Bill Jones and this is my wife and this is Bill, Jr."

Joe then said, "I'd like you to meet Ray Clark. He's riding with me today just to get acquainted with what we're doing at high school." Then turning to Bill Jr., Joe said, "I hear you're planning to enroll at high school next month."

Bill said, "Yes, I'm planning to. What day do we come down to enroll?"

"You come down on Tuesday after Labor Day for enrollment; that's when you'll get lined up for classes. But the way, what are you going to take? Have you decided yet?"

Mr. Jones interrupted, "We were talking about that the other day. I suppose he'll take some English and math, same as I did. But what about that agriculture course? They didn't have that when I went to school."

Bill said, "I think I'd like to take it if I can. Some of the boys that went last year took it."

Joe replied, "You have to decide that for yourself. Do you know what you want to do when you finish high school?"

Bill said, "No, not for sure. I think I'd like to farm, maybe."

Joe turned to Mr. Jones and said, "How large a farm do you have here?"

Mr. Jones said, "We own 200 acres and rent some besides. We were thinking that if Bill wants to come back here to farm, we probably could manage it. But we wouldn't want to stand in the way of his doing something else."

Joe said, "No of course not" then turning toward the barn yard he said, "By the way how many sows do you have? I see two or three out there now."

As we strolled toward the barn, Joe asked more questions until he had a fairly good picture of the crop and livestock program of the farm. He had observed some of the sanitation problems and he knew something of the fertilizer program used on the crops.

After they had visited a little longer Joe said, "This agriculture program at school is planned to help boys get started in agriculture. In order to do that, a boy needs to have a farming program so that he can gain experience at the same time he is studying in school."

Mr. Jones said, "You mean a project like an acre of corn?"

Joe said, "It's more than that. On this farm your major enterprises are dairy and hogs. I'd like to see Bill here begin to get experience in those enterprises by having a gilt and a heifer of his own. Then he could manage them to suit himself and still have your advice and guidance. He'd be learning here by experience and of course we'd try to make it the right kind of experience."

Mr. Jones looked thoughtful, then he said, "Well that makes sense all right."

Joe continued, "Later on I'd like to see Bill's program expand into crops to feed his livestock and into other aspects of farming so he'd be just as good a farmer as possible by the time he graduates."

Mrs. Jones had been a silent and interested listener, but here she interrupted to say, "It seems to me you're outlining a pretty big job for a boy going to school."

Joe said, "That's right, Mrs. Jones, and we certainly need to watch that angle too. Bill looks pretty healthy, but we'd have to gear the program to what Bill could do. What do you think Bill?"

Bill said, "It sounds good to me. I'd like to try anyway. What about the F.F.A.? Is that part of the agriculture work too?"

"Yes," said Joe, "The F.F.A. is an organization of the boys who are taking agriculture in high school. We have quite a program too. The boys buy some of their feeds cooperatively and they give talks and demonstrations. We have meetings for the parents, and we'd want you to bring your folks and come. Then we have our regular meetings every two weeks. We'd want you to attend them too."

Bill said, "I want to get into that organization when I get down there. It sounds like a lot of fun."

Joe said, "It is a lot of fun and a lot of work too. It gives a fellow a chance to learn a lot that he couldn't learn in ordinary class activity." Then he said, "Well, I guess we'd better be going along. I'll see Bill at school the day after Labor Day. It's been nice meeting you and when Bill gets started at school we'll have a lot of details to work out. Drop in to see us at school any time you can."

Mr. Jones said, "We're sure glad you stopped in. We were wondering about a lot of these things for Bill here, and it's going to help a lot having someone down there at school to look after him and help him along. Come out again and we'll do the best we can to help Bill from this end."

* * * *

1. How would you criticise Joe's visit to this farm?

2. Did he go far enough in setting up a farming program on this first visit? Did he go too far?

3. Why did the teacher of agriculture switch the conversation to a question about the student's goals rather than provide an "answer" about taking the agricultural course?

A TEACHER WHO HAD DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Most of us like to tell success stories. They are the most pleasurable and are most likely to be remembered. Occasionally one recalls a story which represents something less than success and yet one from which we may gain a worthwhile experience without all the undesirable results. I want to tell you this kind of a story about one of my former students of agricultural education.

In our education classes on campus my students had often asked the question, "What about discipline? When we get out for practice teaching, how are we going to control discipline?" Sometimes they would say, "When we get out on the job, how will we avoid having discipline troubles?"

Of course my answer to such questions always was, "You won't have discipline problems as a rule, but if you do look to your methods of teaching. Discipline is the fault of the teacher not of the students."

Bill always seemed to agree without question. (Some of the others did not.) He even learned to recite the words back to me on exams or in oral discussion.

In his student teaching work, Bill was quite successful. He worked with classes in vocational agriculture which were going strong with their farming programs and with their F.F.A. work. He was a hard worker and he was very well qualified in subject matter information. The boys in the training center responded very well.

In spite of this success in the training center, the supervising teacher and I both cautioned Bill about keeping his work interesting. We urged him to be positive and forceful and emphasized the necessity for him to become a leader of boys, not just follow where they might lead. In short, we kept after him to improve his methods. Our report on him at the close of his student teaching said in part, "He will be likely to need help to improve his methods during the first year of teaching, otherwise he will have problems with discipline."

The year after Bill graduated, I was visiting first year teachers to provide in-service help to smooth out some of the rough spots which are always present in the road of the first year teacher. I placed Bill's school on my list for an early visit.

Along in October, I finally got to Bill. I arrived before school in the morning and went to the office of the superintendent. We were well acquainted and after the usual greetings I asked, "How is Bill getting along?"

"Just fine," replied the superintendent. "I know you had a statement in the credential file on Bill about possible discipline problems, and I've been watching out, but so far I haven't seen a sign of a problem. I think he's going to be OK."

"I'm certainly glad to hear that," I said, "How are his farm visits? Does he get out to contact parents?"

"Yes, he's out a lot," was the superintendent's answer, "and the folks like him too. I've had a number of farmers mention that he'd been out and how well he seemed to be doing. He's also calling on the young men who are out of school and he's going to start both an adult-farmer class and a young-farmer class next month."

"That's good," I replied. "I see you've given him some time for these classes too. That's certainly a good move if you're going to serve the adults and out-of-school youth. I'll go on to the agriculture room and see how Bill is doing this morning."

"You know the way," replied the superintendent. "I'll see you before you leave and if there's anything I need to do to help that agricultural program along, I want you to let me know."

I went to Bill's room. We visited for a few minutes and then the first class came in. Juniors and seniors made up the membership of the class and the enrollment was quite low. The class work moved along satisfactorily. The students were cooperative and seemed mildly interested even though I felt that the lesson was drab and uninteresting. After the class I asked Bill, "How are you getting along?"

"Oh, OK I guess," he replied. "But I've got one class coming in next hour that's quite a problem. They're nice kids, but I can't seem

to get them interested."

"Are they causing you real trouble?" I asked. "Have they become serious discipline problems?"

"No, I wouldn't say that," Bill replied. "But there's thrity of them and _ _ _, well you'll see," he finished as they began to come in.

Bill turned to his notes, his back to the door as the class gathered. I stood in the fartherest corner of the room and watched as the boys came into the room. They were normal youngsters, full of pep, but quite obviously from substantial homes where a background of good behavior had been developed.

Bill called the class to order. He took a long time to call the roll. After the slips were properly made out and posted outside the door, he opened the discussion with a brief review of the previous day's work.

The students had become restless with the long delays for roll call and other details and they contributed to the discussion with a free-for-all argument aimed at each other as well as at Bill. No one quoted any authority for his statements and Bill asked for none. Occasionally he would raise his voice demanding quiet and there would be a momentary lull in the argument and then it would rise to a new cresendo.

Bill continued with his mild ineffective voice and manner throughout the hour. He smiled occasionally, but for the most part was following the lead of class members rather than exerting leadership of his own.

One bright spot occurred during the class period. One boy, disgusted with the pointless argument finally rose and asked permission of Bill to go to another room for a panel board on which were displayed some materials he wished to use to prove a point.

Before permission was granted, the boy was gone. He soon returned with a piece of plywood on which were mounted a series of electrical units and devices. With no prompting from Bill he set up his board and actually called the class to order, explained the points illustrated

on the panel, demonstrated the circuits and described the application to the farm problem they had been arguing. For the ten or fifteen minutes that this one boy was in command, they had a really functional class.

I had a long talk with Bill after the class. I said, "Bill, you haven't really lost that class yet, but you'll have to get on the ball or you will. You've been on their farms, you know the parents and the families of these boys. Why don't you work with them to develop some real honest to goodness agricultural problems for them to work on. They're swell kids, just itching for something worthwhile to do."

Bill replied, "Yes, they're good kids. You couldn't ask for any better. But I don't think they're too bad in class. They get a little noisy at times but they're alright."

"But really now, when you analyze that class period, what was accomplished?" I asked. "It seemed to me they did nothing but argue. They didn't start with a specific problem and they didn't bring any information to bear on a solution to what they did have as a problem. The only exception was when that boy brought in that panel. Did you notice how they changed while he was demonstrating? That got them interested for a few minutes anyway."

"Well, I guess you're right," replied Bill, "But I figure if I can just make them like me, they'll be all right. That'll take care of all the problems."

"But Bill, kids don't like a man who can't control them. You've got to take care of that problem first and that means you've got to look to your methods." I insisted.

"I'll try," Bill said as we parted.

I went back to the superintendent and said, "Bill's going to have some real discipline problems unless we can help him a little. Will you look in once in a while, and try to get him to recognize the symptoms and encourage him to correct the causes?"

"You bet I will," replied the superintendent, "He's too good a man to lose. If I can help him over this hump, he'll be a top notch teacher. Boy, I'm glad you warned me! I've dropped in on his classes

several times and of course when I am there the discipline looks all right."

I agreed to return later in the year and went on my way. Late in the winter I returned to visit Bill again. The superintendent met me as I entered the building early in the morning. He said, "Bill is about washed up. I have tried my best, but I haven't been able to snap him out of it. He's swell with the young farmers and with the adult-farmers, but he can't interest the high school boys."

I'm certainly sorry to hear that," I replied. "I hoped Bill would make the grade. I felt last year that he could fail or that he might become one of our best teachers depending on that one thing."

"Yes, I think you were right too, in recommending him for a teaching certificate, but he has gone the wrong way for us. We'll have to let him go. I don't know whether we'll even be able to keep him the rest of the year."

I visited Bill's classes, but there was no point in discussing them. Bill and I simply agreed that he had failed to use methods which he had practiced as a student teacher. We discussed work he might do in the future. Bill said, "I don't want to take another high school job. It isn't fair to the kids to have a teacher who is a failure."

* * * *

1. Should I have indicated the potential weakness as well as strength for Bill on his student teaching report?

2. Can an individual learn good methods of teaching?

3. What other approaches might I have tried to help Bill improve his methods of teaching?

A FIELD TRIP WITH A CLASS IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

When a state supervisor visits schools, he encounters many different kinds of situations. These are difficult to classify because they are created by many personalities operating under varied social and economic circumstances.

Some teachers of agriculture whom I have visited have always run a movie for every class I visited; others have "put on a show" where the students obviously had rehearsed the lesson on previous days and everything went too smoothly; others have found it necessary to assign students "supervised study", so they could talk over their problems with me; and a few seem to go ahead with their normal program.

I visited one of these latter teachers in western Michigan some time ago. After I had visited for a few minutes with the superintendent, he said, "Perhaps you had better go on down to the agriculture room. John wants to take a field trip with this first-hour class and he wants to see you before the class comes in."

I went to the room and was greeted courteously by the teacher. He immediately said, "We have been planning to take a field trip today to visit a poultry farm and I wondered if it would put you out if we went ahead? We planned this trip before we knew you were coming and hated to cancel it. Could you go along, and would it be alright with you if we go ahead with our plans?"

I assured him that it would be a pleasure to go along on the trip and also said, "I'd certainly hate to think any agriculture teacher would upset his instructional program just because a supervisor was planning a visit. After all, that wouldn't be helping to improve the program."

"Well, that's what I thought, but I wanted to make sure," was his reply.

The class came in with coats and hats, ready to go. John called them to order and said, "Now you remember we planned this trip in con-

nection with this unit of work. We decided that we wanted to see how Mr. _____ makes a success of his poultry business. We all have a list of questions we want answered. Let's remember that we agreed on the necessity of being reasonably quiet in the laying houses so as not to frighten the birds. Now we'll get in the bus and get started."

We boarded the bus and John drove us out to the farm. When we arrived, John took us into a supply shed and introduced us to the owner. John started the group discussion by asking a question about the enterprise. The owner began his answer and then led the boys into the first laying house.

The boys examined the construction of the house, studied the equipment, and asked questions regarding feeding and management. After the discussion had been going for a time, John passed out a sheet for each boy, showing a detailed financial summary of the poultry enterprise on the farm, for the past five years. It showed per cent of production of eggs, feed used, labor, and other expenses and receipts by months.

This sheet gave rise to further questions. The boys were led into other laying houses with slightly different construction. They learned of the problems the owner had faced in developing his business and they discovered how his practices had paid off in net income.

On the way back to school I asked John, "Have you known Mr. _____ very long?"

"Yes, quite a while," was his answer, "There are quite a number of poultrymen around here whom we might have visited, but this man had the best set of records."

"But didn't you have quite a time to get him to provide such detailed records?" I asked.

"No, I came out about three weeks ago and told him I would like to bring the class out and asked if it would be all right. He said I could and to let him know when we were ready to come," replied John.

"You must have come out since then," I said.

"Yes, I made another trip out a week ago and we set the date so it would fit in with the work we had in class. Then I came out last night

after school to make sure everything was OK."

"When did you get the records?" was my next question.

"Oh, I got them last night. We were talking about our plans for today and I asked Mr. _____ about some of his feed costs, and about his production records. He went over to his desk and pulled out that sheet. He said I could make copies for the boys if I wanted to. He let me take the sheet back to school and I ran off enough for the class. I thought it was pretty nice of him to let us copy them like that and the boys seem to appreciate it too."

"Yes, I think they did," I replied, then I asked, "By the way, I've been on a lot of field trips and I've conducted some too, but I don't believe I ever saw one where there was no horse-play and such close attention as there was today. How do you account for it?"

John thought a moment and then said, "I don't know, I really hadn't thought much about it. You see poultry is our major farm enterprise in this area, so we're interested in the subject. Then too, we planned this trip for a purpose. It wasn't something I set up. We really wanted to learn some things. It was the boys' trip and I don't believe, when you have that combination, that you need to worry much about inattention."

"Well, I guess you're right. It certainly was interesting."

"I'm glad you could go," John replied, "There's another thing in my favor here. You see, we've got just about the best kind of people you could find anywhere, right here in this community and that helps a lot too."

* * * *

1. What do you think of the teacher going ahead with his plans for a field trip when he learned that the state supervisor was planning a visit?

2. How would you criticise this field trip as a teaching device? What suggestions would you offer for improving the trip?

3. Had the teacher made adequate plans for the trip?